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Lansing Police Deploy Body-Worn Cameras

New Video Technology Protects Officers and Citizens

(LANSING) - Mayor Virg Bernero and Lansing Police Chief Mike Yankowski today announced that body-worn video cameras are now in use by the department's patrol officers. Mayor Bernero announced last year in his State of the City Address that his administration would make deploying body-worn cameras a top priority.

The new cameras are designed to keep officers and citizens safe by recording interactions that can later be used as evidence if charges are brought in a case. The department purchased 130 body-worn cameras and related support equipment manufactured by Taser at a cost of \$181,000. The cost also includes enhanced data storage for the large volumes of video that will be recorded.

"Body cameras are the next generation of technology that will help our police officers do their jobs more safely and more effectively," said Mayor Bernero. "When incidents are recorded, it will help secure convictions in criminal cases and also help clarify what happened when there is a dispute or a claim that a citizen or an officer acted improperly."

Chief Yankowski noted that the cameras have been well-received by the Lansing officers who are now using them in the field. More than half of the department's officers have been trained on the use of the new equipment, with the other half to be trained in the next few weeks.

"Our patrol officers are very supportive of using the body-worn cameras because it adds a layer of protection for both the officer and our citizens," Yankowski said. "When everything is recorded, there is less room for disputes about who said what. The cameras are not a magic wand that will solve every case, because video recordings do not always capture everything that happens, but they will be a very useful tool for our personnel in filing their reports, making their cases and obtaining convictions."

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Chief Yankowski noted that in most circumstances the video recordings will be retained for 30 days. Video related to traffic stops will be retained for 90 days. Under state data retention policies, video that is related to a specific criminal case will be retained for 42 months and video related to homicides will be retained indefinitely.

The department will utilize a cloud-based data storage system that is specifically designed for archiving and retrieving law enforcement video recordings, Yankowski said. The system is capable of automatically tagging videos to associate them with a particular police incident report and includes tools to assist with redacting private information from the videos, such as obscuring the faces of individuals who are not involved in a criminal matter. Yankowski noted that state law requires the department to protect private information if the videos are released to the public under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Yankowski also noted that the cameras will not be used to record sensitive information, such as interviews with victims of sexual assaults. Witnesses and victims may be reluctant to talk if their statements are recorded, so officers will use discretion in accord with departmental policies to determine if it is appropriate to record certain interactions with witnesses and victims. Yankowski said the department is in the process of installing technology that will automatically trigger the body-worn camera when an officer activates the overhead lights on their police cruiser.

Mayor Bernero noted that his proposed budget for the city's new fiscal year includes funding to enhance LPD's staff capacity to manage the high volume of video data that will be collected and stored and to process FOIA requests for video footage. Funding for additional data storage is also included in the mayor's budget plan.

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